




5728
4 Sep 2012

MEMORANDUM

From: 
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CG-0922

Reply to: CG-0922
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To: CG-11D

Subj: SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE FOR U.S. COAST GUARD OMBUDSMAN
PROGRAM

Ref: (a) U.S. Coast Guard Public Affairs Manual, COMDTINST M5728 (Series)

1. The U.S. Coast Guard's social media program presents unit commanding officers with a unique opportunity to leverage their unit ombudsman to communicate command messages to, and solicit feedback from, Coast Guard families.
2. By serving as a *command-authorized administrator* on an *official* unit Facebook page an ombudsman can act as a force multiplier and subject matter expert on issues of importance to U.S. Coast Guard dependents.
3. All members of the U.S. Coast Guard Ombudsman Program shall follow *all* rules regarding *OPSEC* and *INFOSEC* at all times.
4. Members of the U.S. Coast Guard Ombudsman Program should understand the difference between *official*, *unofficial*, and *personal* use of social media for Coast Guard communication as outlined in public affairs policy.
 - a. *Official communication* occurs when an ombudsman is speaking on behalf of the command.
 - (1) Example: Announcing a unit-sponsored town hall meeting to discuss a change in VA education benefits for military dependents via the unit's official Facebook page or on a non-official site.
 - b. *Unofficial communication* occurs when an ombudsman is speaking about official duties but not on behalf of or at the behest of the command.
 - (1) Example: Leaving a comment on a non-official site correcting the record on a change in VA benefits for military dependents.
 - c. *Personal communication* occurs when an ombudsman is speaking about the U.S. Coast Guard but not speaking about or in reference to official duties.
 - (1) Example: Leaving a comment on an official or non-official site/social network regarding his/her personal experiences with the VA education benefits program.

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5. As command representatives, all *official* and *unofficial* communication by members of the U.S. Coast Guard Ombudsman Program is governed by U.S. Coast Guard public affairs policy and the public affairs posture of the commanding officer of the unit. Public affairs policy exists in the form of the U.S. Coast Guard Public Affairs Manual; the use of social media is discussed in Chapter 11.

6. When engaging in *official* or *unofficial* communication on non-official sites the ombudsman is required to identify him/herself by name and position and must use approved Coast Guard disclaimers (located in Chapter 11 of the U.S. Coast Guard Public Affairs Manual). This is to avoid any perception of endorsement by the U.S. Coast Guard of third-party sites or tools.

7. U.S. Coast Guard public affairs policy allows for one *official* Facebook page per unit. An ombudsman shall not create additional *official* or *unofficial* Facebook pages to communicate about or on behalf of the unit. An ombudsman may, however, represent the unit in an *official* or *unofficial* capacity on a non-official site.

8. U.S. Coast Guard public affairs policy does not allow for an ombudsman to have a standalone Facebook page to discuss Coast Guard families or issues. A unit ombudsman should work with his/her command to:

- a. Engage as part of the command team on the unit's *official* Facebook page, or;
- b. Work with the unit to establish and serve as the administrator of an *official* Facebook page for the unit if one does not already exist to ensure information is being passed to Coast Guard families.

9. At this time, Facebook is the only approved social media tool authorized for *official* online communication by the U.S. Coast Guard at the unit level. Units wishing to engage on social media tools not currently authorized (e.g. – a unit blog, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, etc.) shall work with their servicing public affairs shop to seek a waiver.

10. Third-party social media tools (e.g. – Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, etc.) are not authorized for the *official release of Coast Guard information*. All command information posted to Facebook must be released through an authorized source prior to dissemination via social media sites/networks. More information on the *official release of information* can be found in the U.S. Coast Guard Public Affairs Manual.

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